462 heavy sods in the rice paddy; nevertheless, women and younger girls
[241] often do this work along with the men and boys if time runs short. There are some women who prepare their farm land without the help of their husbands.

[313] In mountain work, women produce almost as much as men except
[843] that they do not handle the large logs. Even pregnant women make three or four daily mountain trips, sometimes up until the day of
[482] childbirth. Only the mode of carrying wood, like any load, differs for the sexes: a man uses a carrying stick supported on his shoulder, with two bundles attached to each end; a woman carries bundles on her back, tied and held in place by a tump line tied over her forehead. Women can carry loads of 100 to 120 pounds in this manner.

[312] Men seldom carry water from the tank or faucet to the house; this is considered women's work, although younger boys are expected to
241 help at times. Work in the potato fields is mainly women's respon-
462 sibility. Their hands are also preferred in rice transplanting, where dexterity is needed in pulling out the tender shoots from the seed bed and replanting them in straight rows at measured intervals. Occasionally a young man helps, and boys sometimes try to work along with their sisters when they learn transplanting. Both men and women sow
462 the seed beds. In special activities, such as house building, a more dis-
[342] tinct division of labor can be observed. In any building activity, men do the structural work and women carry materials and cook for the
[653] men. The same division of labor is found on community projects, road building, fencing against wild pigs, or repairing the water pipes. In general, however, no special comment is made if either a man or woman performs work usually done by the opposite sex.

887 Men and women work in the fields and forests from ages 15 to 60.
462 When they approach 60, men like to "retire." If possible, they turn over their responsibilities as household heads to their eldest sons. From
[464] then on, they tend to stay home more and more. They can still help with less demanding work, making bamboo rings for firewood bundles, sawing wood, or doing odd jobs around the house. Approaching old age, most men become economically useless and in other ways contribute little to society. For old women, quite the contrary is true. Even grandmothers who are well over 60 seem strong and active. Most of
[241] them go to the fields to plant or harvest potatoes or other vegetables. One woman, well into her sixties and bent over from arthritis, took long walks to distant potato fields, with a heavy load of slips or potatoes in a basket on her back, a hoe on top of it, supporting herself on a
[855] stick. Other grandmothers look after the youngest children, thus freeing the mother for work. Old women also cook, help bundle firewood,

and look after the sick. Even if they are too old for any work, like two oldsters over 80 years, they can still hold the youngest grandchild. Two exceptional old men, brothers of almost the same age, pass their time by making rope bags and mats from the fiber of the fan palm. Both are active as financial experts, investing money here and there and lending it for high interests in various shrewd transactions.

INFORMAL AND FORMAL COOPERATION

Cooperation plays a prominent part in Taira economy. Assistance is always given for major tasks, such as preparing grass land for farm use or house building, or for work which must be done quickly, such as transplanting rice or harvesting and milling sugar. In fact, since wet rice cultivation depends on assistance in any culture that works its paddies by hand, it is noteworthy that the term *iimarû*, used in Taira for labor exchange in planting and harvesting, is also extended to other mutual assistance. The term, literally translated, means "gathering by rotation." A family who plans a project that needs the help of others makes an informal arrangement with relatives or neighbors to help for one or more days. This is simply done by notifying individuals that such help is needed. No one, unless he has urgent reasons, would refuse to comply with a call for assistance. If it is a small task, a few close relatives are asked. In most larger undertakings, it is the neighborhood group that lends a hand. These mutual-assistance groups usually form within the central village and within each of the geographical clusters of the outlying village, although close relatives from other parts of the community may be called. However, the most recent arrivals in Taira, all present members of one family line who have the same surname, act jointly in reclamation of neglected fields to strengthen their economic position.

Return services are expected, but nobody would admit that there is any thought of equal compensation and would not even joke about the matter. There is a strong feeling that calculated thinking is unseemly not only among relatives but also among unrelated neighbors. One man, when asked what would happen if a person refused to comply to a request for help, answered, "There is no such dirty person, and if there were one, he would be an outcast." During the rice planting season, persons helping in another's fields will shortly be helped themselves. In housebuilding, a long time may pass until those who aided will need aid in return.

Except for people over 56, pregnant women, and mothers of chil-

653 dren under 3 years, every adult past school age, male or female, is re-
[464] quired to work on community projects if called by the village head. Officials may pay the village for exemption from this duty. There are two kinds of community corvées, those in which every adult and qualified member of a household has to participate, and those in which only one household representative is required to attend. As many as 12 days a year may be spent by each villager on road construction, clearing of village land, improvement of village-owned tea fields, or in similar projects. In some cases, where the central government has granted support, this work may be compensated by a small payment. More often, however, it is a free contribution to the village effort.

474 The strength of deeply rooted cooperative behavior seems to have been an essential factor in introducing formal cooperatives successfully in this area. The northern village of Oku is credited with being the first community in Kunigami province to organize a cooperative store in 1906. Initiative for this organization was provided through the Japanese administration. Taira was the first village in present-day Higashi township to establish a cooperative. In 1918 the village was poverty stricken, and village leaders, the president of the Young People's Association, one of the teachers, and others, made a study of the Oku organization. They then convinced the Taira headman of the great possibilities. Over the years the Taira cooperative supported by the majority of Tairan households, through buying of mountain products, marketing, running the store, and sugar production, tried to improve the village economy. One immediate result was that the indebtedness to money lenders from outside the village, especially to the owners of sailing junks which transported mountain products south, could be avoided. Up until the war the cooperative flourished and improved economy.

The end of the war found the village cooperative totally defunct, and it took several years to restore the organization. At present it owns the store, the sugar mill, and the truck. It also controls the use of the
[245] village-owned tea fields in which everybody has the right to grow at least one row of tea bushes.

474 Shares in the cooperative are held by households, and almost every-
621 one in Taira is a member. The two directors and several officers are elected by shareholders. Actually the directorship does not change often, and the most influential leaders usually hold the office. They may initiate measures which will aid the village economy, but they have no absolute power: a check and balance system protects the people. As one person put it, "It is always necessary to have a few persons outside the business so that they can check what is going on. If people of the

607 476 on one's mother's side and, after marriage, the wife's family. In seeking mutual assistance for rice planting, house building and other undertakings, such relatives may be approached. In other words, kin, neighbors, and members of the same geographical section of the village participate almost equally in mutual assistance groups. Maternal relatives join in family celebrations and in the discussion of family matters. Since many decisions are made jointly with the help of relatives, there are frequent occasions for the kindred to gather in the evening at one house or another.

561 Each Okinawan also belongs to an age group. As will be described in the section on socialization, beginning at kindergarten an Okinawan becomes associated with a group of boys and girls who will remain his 575 companions through school. As a member of junior high school he ●653 will join the formal Student's Association, which is responsible for certain community projects. High school students and all unmarried young adults belong to the Young People's Association, which is both a social group and a cooperative work group.

575 After marriage there are several associations which one may join. 185 Adult married women who are under 57 belong to the Women's Asso- [562] ciation, which is affiliated with an island organization dedicated to "modernizing" women's lives. The organization is lead by a few women who are in contact with the district and island organization. They attempt at semisocial gatherings to introduce changes aimed at easing [262] the burdens of daily life and the pressure of poverty. For example, they are trying to influence the women to return to making their own bean paste rather than spending precious cash. The leaders show the women how to make bean paste and encourage them to set aside one work-free day a month to catch up with neglected housework. Many of the efforts of the organization, however, are not too successful. Most women go back to their homes and find that the accustomed ways are easier to follow. One has learned to live with economic pressures and tradition and established custom is a strong force. So the few forward-looking women have a difficult task in rallying others.

Both adult married males and females may also join an organization similar in objective—the Home Improvement group. Although the men who are village leaders belong to this association, the majority of the members are the same women who are leaders in the Women's Association.

575 Before World War II there was an association of older men.* Al- 887 though this group seldom, if ever, meets, it still sends a representative 623 to the village council and to a few village functions.

* Apparently of relatively recent origin.

2:Maretzki & Maretzki E-5 (1954-1955) 1963 AC7 Okinawa AC7
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Both adult men and women also belong to mutual assistance groups, mutual loan associations, and to the work groups described in Chapter 3. All individuals between 16 and 57 are expected to cooperate in community work projects. All households are members of the village cooperative. Since most villagers look to the cooperative for help in improving their economic conditions, this draws them together in a familial way.

It will be noted that age and marital status are prerequisites for membership in most of these associations and that only one is exclusively for women and one exclusively for men.

Taira culture is essentially egalitarian. Personal status is not ascribed by membership in social classes or achieved by the accumulation of wealth. Furthermore, although power and respect are the attributes of certain village offices, such as headman and school teacher, these only give rank *ex officio*. An ex-headman has no higher status than one who has never held such an office.

There are factors, however, which do differentiate Tairans as to personal status. Men have somewhat more power and command more respect than women; adults must be addressed respectfully by children; older siblings have more authority and privileges than younger; and in recent years the educated are somewhat more respected and are more likely to be chosen to hold office than those with the minimum required amount of schooling. And since education often leads to better jobs, greater wealth is sometimes associated with status, though not a necessary prerequisite.

The status of women in Okinawa, although, ideally, inferior to that of men, is in reality relatively high. Many cultural forms are based on the principal of male superiority, which Japanese values tend to reinforce, but there are numerous indications in daily life that women command a comparatively high degree of respect and power. It is difficult to assess to what degree status differences have been influenced by contact with Japanese; the importance of women in religious affairs suggest their higher status prior to the introduction of the Japanese school system in Taira.

As will be discussed in the chapter on religion, although the veneration of one's father's ancestors is the core of one part of Okinawan religion, the ceremonies are run by the women. The oldest male of each main house and the household head in each household are nominally responsible for keeping the tablets of the ancestors on his house shrine, but the actual upkeep of this ancestral shelf and the bimonthly offerings are performed by the women. If no direct male descendant is available to keep the ancestral tablets, a widowed woman retains them

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like "owners" of the concrete objects which they inhabit. These objects can be made subservient to human needs if care is taken not to offend the deities. As long as proper ritual observances are performed, humans need not fear their hostility. They are addressed in prayers and chants, and people make offerings to them at several ceremonies during the year. No one in Taira, including the priestess, has any exact knowledge about their characteristics, and there is no theological dogma, but people know that when building a house, for example, one must announce his intention to the deities and pacify these spirits who have been carried with the lumber from the mountains or with gravel from the beach and the sea. They must be thanked for letting the builder use such materials and sent back to their natural abode. Before the house is finished, the surrounding plot of land must be cleared of all evil spirits. Neglect of such ceremonies can turn supernatural beings into adversaries. One family who neglected proper rituals on their house lot when they built their home tried to appease angry deities by holding a ceremony a year after the house was finished because bad luck had befallen members of the household. Although most supernatural beings can be pacified by proper observance of rituals, there are some who are inherently malevolent. These ogres may be seen in the form of fire balls or in some other shape or physical appearance.

The worship of these nature deities and the observance of ceremonies in their behalf are in the hands of the high priestess and her female assistants. In former times each main house, later each village, had its own priestess. The present high priestess in Taira derives her office from a much later institution, a nation-wide hierarchy of religious officials established by the Okinawan king in an effort to combine religion with political influence and supervision in the villages. Today the high priestess has no association with the central government; the Japanese abolished the system. The hierarchy of female religious officials (see Lebra: 1958), those representing main houses, and the chief village priestess is no longer clearly delineated in Taira, since representatives of several offices have left the island or died, and the vacancies have not been filled. The high priestess has taken over most of the religious functions. Her chief assistants are older women from the two main houses. While these three women officiate, several other women are in attendance as helpers. In spite of the diminishing role of animistic religion in the daily life of younger people, the high priestess still enjoys prestige in the community. She is exempted from communal labor in recognition of her status.

The present high priestess is a woman in her fifties who works and

857 fed every day. This is a job for him, and if he does not do it he gets
866 a scolding. . . . My husband does not believe in letting him play too much, and so K. has to take his job seriously—otherwise he will get scolded by his father."

The mother of a 5-year-old girl, after mentioning that she washes her own hair and shoes, said, "The day before yesterday she helped me clean up the place after eating, and so I told her that if she would do this two times a day for me, she would get one yen. She said she would do it, but I don't expect much because she is still
[861] too young." The girl's father is a township employee, but giving one yen as reward is also done by other mothers when they feel that a child has done more than can be expected at that age. Of her 8-year-old daughter, a mother says that "she can mop the floor, fetch water, watch the baby, and serve rice into the bowls at dinner time. But she does not really have to do these chores regularly. Whenever I am busy I ask her to do these things for me," and she adds that her girl very seldom refuses, but "if she should not do what I ask her to, I scold her." And the mother of another girl, 7 years old, tells that her daughter's job is "to mop the floor every day. She knows that it
[861] is her responsibility and she has to do it. When she does not do it, she gets a scolding until she does it. She usually does it, though, with-
[855] out too much difficulty." Only a few mothers point to care of younger siblings as one of the duties. It simply seems to be taken for granted so much that it is not even mentioned.

857 An enthusiastic 6-year-old girl surprised her mother one day, not
866 long after starting school, by taking the family laundry to the well
296 and washing it. When she returned, she hung out the wash carefully to dry, then went out to join her playmates. The mother came home, examined the wash, and found that it still needed a good scrubbing. Quickly gathering the once-washed clothing, she hurried down to the well. She chose a path around the back of the house to avoid being seen by her daughter. That night she thanked the girl for doing the wash and helping her so much. "I did not want to hurt her feelings by telling her that the washing was still dirty. It was fortunate that she did not see me going down to wash it the second time, for if she did, she would have been discouraged and might never have done it again," reported the mother.

857 The community as a whole also makes some demands on these
866 children of school age. Several times a year they sweep the streets
● 653 and adjoining public areas in the morning, before they leave for school.

Children seem to have an ambivalent attitude toward greater pres-